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# Security Council

Sixty-second year

*Provisional*

## 5815th meeting

Friday, 21 December 2007, 10.25 a.m.
New York

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| *President*: | Mr. Spatafora | (Italy) |
| *Members*: | Belgium | Mr. Verbeke |
| | China | Mr. Liu Zhenmin |
| | Congo | Mr. Okio |
| | France | Mr. Ripert |
| | Ghana | Mr. Christian |
| | Indonesia | Mr. Natalegawa |
| | Panama | Mr. Suescum |
| | Peru | Mr. Voto-Bernales |
| | Qatar | Mr. Al-Nasser |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Dolgov |
| | Slovakia | Mr. Burian |
| | South Africa | Mr. Sangqu |
| | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Sir John Sawers |
| | United States of America | Mr. Khalilzad |

## Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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07-65518 (E)

*The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.*

**Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

**The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question**

**The President**: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Ambassador Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

It is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Ambassador Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

I invite Mr. Pascoe to take a seat at the Council table.

**Mr. Pascoe**: Since the Annapolis Conference, bilateral negotiations between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization have commenced. Strong, international engagement has been reflected in a landmark donors conference, a Quartet meeting and a meeting between the Quartet and members of the League of Arab States — all in Paris on 17 December.

At the same time, developments on the ground, including new settlement activity and ongoing violence, have been a cause of concern. The goal in the weeks and months ahead must be to generate real momentum on all aspects of the peace process.

On 17 December, the Secretary-General joined representatives of 68 States and international institutions at a donors conference in Paris, which was hosted by the French Government and was aimed at securing financial support to the Palestinian Authority over the next three years. Donors commended the Palestinian Reform and Development Plan presented by Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad and pledged a reported $7.4 billion in assistance to the Palestinian Authority.

We welcome the breadth and depth of donor support and we commend the efforts of all who were involved in making the donors' conference a success. As the Secretary-General stressed, the promise of Paris will only be realized if all partners — the Palestinian Authority itself, donors and the Government of Israel — now exert a common effort. Donors will need to follow through on pledges, as will the Palestinian Authority on implementing its reform agenda; Israel will need to ease significantly restrictions on movement and access. The four co-chairs — France, Norway, the European Commission and Quartet Representative Mr. Blair — have committed to following up on the conference.

On the same day as the Paris conference, the Quartet met and "reaffirmed the importance of Palestinian economic and institutional capacity-building in order to lay the foundation for a viable and prosperous Palestinian State in the West Bank and Gaza". (Press release SG/2134, 17 December 2007)

Expressing its strong support for the Palestinian Reform and Development Plan, the Quartet urged donors to resume direct bilateral assistance to the Palestinian Authority and endorsed a final extension of the Temporary International Mechanism until the end of March 2008. As I mentioned, the Quartet meeting was then followed by a quite productive meeting between the Quartet and members of the League of Arab States.

In addition to his role in the preparation of the donor conference, Quartet Representative Tony Blair is continuing his efforts to secure agreement on and implementation of joint projects between the Palestinian Authority and Israel, which are crucial to bringing about improvements on the ground.

I would like now to turn to the bilateral negotiations. Pursuant to the Annapolis joint understanding, Israeli-Palestinian negotiations formally began on 12 December, in a meeting of the joint steering committee headed by Israeli Foreign Minister Livni and Mr. Ahmed Qureia. The Quartet welcomed this development and reaffirmed its commitment to remain closely involved and to support the parties' efforts to conclude an agreement before the end of 2008.

Central to improving the situation on the ground and to building confidence to support bilateral negotiations, is action by the parties, in the words of

the Annapolis joint understanding, to immediately implement their respective obligations under the Road Map. In this respect, we note that on 4 December tenders were announced for the construction of 307 new housing units in the Israeli settlement of Har Homa. The Secretary-General reaffirmed the United Nations position on the illegality of settlements.

Members of the Council will recall that phase one of the Road Map requires the Government of Israel to freeze all settlement activity, including the so-called natural growth. The Secretary-General has received written protests from the chief negotiator of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the Secretary General of the League of Arab States and the Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia.

The Quartet expressed its concern over the tenders, calling on the parties to refrain from steps that undermine confidence and underscoring the importance of avoiding any actions that could prejudice the outcome of permanent status negotiations. We reiterate the call of the Quartet for both parties to make progress on their phase one Road Map obligations, including an Israeli freeze on settlements, removal of unauthorized outposts and opening of East Jerusalem institutions, as well as Palestinian steps to end violence, terrorism and incitement.

In this regard, following the November deployment of 300 additional security personnel in Nablus, the Palestinian Authority recently deployed some 500 armed police officers to the West Bank city of Tulkarem in an effort to seize unlicensed weapons and impose law and order. Tensions have risen between Palestinian security forces and armed militants — notably in Hebron, where the Governor's house was recently attacked. This underscores both the progress being made and the continuing challenges facing the Palestinian Authority in asserting its control in the West Bank.

There is a need for support to and reform of the Palestinian Authority security forces to ensure their effective performance. Continuing and enhanced security cooperation between Israel and the Palestinian security forces is also essential. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, obstacles to movement in the West Bank now stand at 563. Construction work on the barrier within occupied Palestinian territory, in deviation from the Green Line and in contravention of the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion, continues.

The insecurity facing civilians on both sides of the conflict is underscored by figures over the reporting period: 37 Palestinians were killed and 71 injured by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), 2 Palestinians were killed and 21 injured in internal violence and 11 Israelis were injured by Palestinian militants.

The worst violence took place in or emanated from Gaza, from which 216 rockets and mortars were fired by Palestinian militants, either at crossings points or at Israel. We condemn these indiscriminate attacks, which endanger civilians in Israeli communities adjacent to the Gaza Strip. They have caused injuries and damage and disrupted the lives of thousands of Israelis. These attacks also threaten the safety of humanitarian workers at the crossings.

The IDF has conducted deadly raids into the Gaza Strip, targeting militants allegedly responsible for rocket attacks. Islamic Jihad has threatened to resume suicide attacks inside Israel. The Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit is spending his nineteenth month in captivity in Gaza. Israel continues to express concerns about alleged smuggling of weapons and materiel into Gaza. In these volatile circumstances, we continue to urge full respect by all parties for international humanitarian law.

The humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip remains of grave concern. The crossings into Gaza continue to be restricted for people and goods — though a number of Gazans were successful in leaving through the Rafah crossing to participate in the Hajj to Mecca. Only 13 basic categories of food and household items, medical supplies and some water sanitation equipment are being allowed into the Strip from Israel. Reductions in fuel announced on 28 October also continue.

Cash money is unable to enter into Gaza owing to restrictions on the import of dollars and other currencies, except for specified disbursements, such as the salaries of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and the Palestinian Authority.

Exports from Gaza have virtually stopped since June. Members of the Council will recall that the November 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access,

designed to ensure a sustainable Gaza economy, set a target of 400 trucks per day exiting Gaza with exports. As a measure of the current situation, a total of 77 trucks have left Gaza through Kerem Shalom since June — 7 left in August with potatoes and 66 in December with flowers and strawberries. At least 14 Palestinians have died after permission to exit Gaza for medical treatment was denied or delayed. Without the resumption of the regular flow of imports and exports, Gaza's socio-economic and humanitarian conditions will continue to deteriorate.

I welcome Prime Minister Fayyad's stated willingness for the Palestinian Authority to man re-opened crossings, and call on all parties to take up this proposal with a sense of urgency and responsibility.

Turning to Lebanon, the presidential election continues to be the focus of negotiations among Lebanese political leaders. There appears to be agreement in principle on the candidature of General Michel Suleiman for the presidency. However, the parties remain deeply divided on the next steps to bring about the election of General Suleiman, who is currently serving as the Commander of the Lebanese Army. The Lebanese Constitution requires that two years lapse before a State official can be elected president — and of course that would have to be changed.

The opposition has stated that there must first be agreement on the composition of the new Government before the Parliament can meet to elect General Suleiman as President. The 14 March Coalition maintains that any such agreement should come after the election of the president. Despite several initiatives and efforts by various parties to break the deadlock, the Lebanese have yet to reach agreement on that issue. As a result, and since the last briefing of the Council, there have been further postponements to the parliamentary session to elect the new president. The next session is currently scheduled for 22 December.

The Secretary-General and his representatives in the region have been in close contact with Lebanese leaders, and more broadly with regional and international leaders, to try to find a solution to the prolonged political crisis. On 17 December, while in Paris for the Palestinian donor conference, the Secretary-General called a meeting on Lebanon attended by representatives of Egypt, France, Italy, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Spain, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, the United States, the European Union, the European Commission and the European Council. The statement following that meeting reaffirmed strong and non-negotiable support for Lebanon and its people. It urged that Parliament be allowed to convene immediately to fulfil its constitutional duties and insisted that outside Powers act in compliance with the decisions of the Security Council and fully respect Lebanon's Constitution and democratic institutions.

The ongoing lack of agreement and the resultant constitutional void are matters of great concern. The current situation is dangerous and unsustainable. It is of fundamental importance for the Lebanese State that all Lebanese leaders seek a solution that enables presidential elections to take place immediately. That is all the more necessary given the continuing attacks on Lebanon's sovereignty and stability, most recently illustrated by the brutal assassination of General François el-Hajj of the Lebanese Armed Forces.

In South Lebanon, the situation has remained calm. However, an increased number of Israeli air violations were recorded at the end of November. As noted in last month's briefing, overflights are violations of resolution 1701 (2006), and also undermine the credibility of both the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and the Lebanese Armed Forces. In addition, the request for the Israel Defense Forces to provide technical strike data on cluster munitions is still pending.

The next few months are critical for the renewed peace process between Israel and the Palestinians. Solid progress will be essential in the bilateral negotiations. That, however, is unlikely to be achieved or to be sustainable without serious improvements on the ground. Donors must follow through on their commendable Paris commitments, and the parties must act to fulfil their responsibilities so that a new climate of confidence, security and physical mobility is established.

The Quartet envoys will continue to meet to take stock of the situation in the important period ahead, and the Quartet principals have agreed to meet regularly in 2008 to review progress and provide support for the parties' efforts. It will also be essential for the Quartet and Arab League partners to remain in close contact to support the bilateral process and to coordinate closely regarding the broader regional

dimensions of peace, bearing in mind the importance of the Arab peace initiative. The Secretary-General and the United Nations will continue to work for a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, based on Security Council resolutions.

**The President**: I thank Ambassador Pascoe for his briefing.

**Expression of thanks to outgoing members of the Council**

**The President**: As this may be the last meeting of the Security Council for December 2007, I would like, on behalf of the Council, to express the most sincere appreciation of the Council to the five outgoing members — the Congo, Ghana, Peru, Qatar and Slovakia. I know I speak on behalf of the Council when I commend those five members for their hard work and contributions during their 2006-2007 term on the Security Council.

I think that when members of a family leave the family, it is mainly a moment of sadness — a moment in which we acknowledge what the members have given to the family. As in any family, there are moments of discussion — "frank discussion", as we say in our language — but it is precisely through the possibility of having frank discussions and exchanges of view that we enrich ourselves and achieve results. It is through the efforts and points of view of everybody that we reach our goals. I feel that, along with the sadness, there is also a sense of the special bond that we have built among us all in this period. We will remember. I urge all my colleagues to take care.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

*The meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.*